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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/SCE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KFLU AEMR PREL CASC PINR AMGT HR

SUBJECT: LARGE CROATIAN STUDENT GROUP EXPOSED TO H1N1;

CONFLICTING REPORTS ON CONFIRMED CASES

REF: BELGRADE 703

¶1. (U) A Croatian Ministry of Health spokesperson confirmed to us that 7 members of a large student group that returned from Spain last week, as well as 3 additional unrelated individuals, have tested positive for H1N1. This brings the total number of confirmed cases in Croatia to 36. While some individuals on this list have contracted the disease inside Croatia, all have at least been exposed to someone who recently traveled. According to the Ministry, 61 students, who live in the coastal town of Sibenik, returned from the trip reporting flu-like symptoms. The Ministry did not test all the students, only a representative sample, and of those, only 7 were positive. Nevertheless, the press is reporting widely that all 61 students are positive for H1N1. The three other cases reported come from Zagreb, Osijek, and Rijeka. The Rijeka case is an individual who recently returned from the EXIT music festival in Novi Sad, Serbia, at which a large number of Serbs reportedly contracted the disease (see reftel).

¶2. (U) Comment: It's possible the press has confused the words "exposed to" with "infected with" in the case of this student group. Nevertheless, since this group would represent a rapid expansion in the number of infected individuals in Croatia, post will continue to monitor the situation. The case of the disease spreading among concert-goers in Serbia is also concerning. With numerous summer concerts taking place throughout Croatia, including a U2 concert in Zagreb in a several weeks, the potential exists for easy transmission to large numbers of people.

WALKER